

# WORKING OUT YOUR SALVATION AND JUST WORKING OUT: TOWARD A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PHYSICAL FITNESS

by Brian Allred\*

PHYSICAL FITNESS is big business today. And the fitness industry, which includes both gyms and weight loss centers, continues to grow. According to some of the most recent statistics, gym memberships in the United States increased 18.6% between 2008 and 2014, with over 54 million Americans paying gym membership fees in 2014.<sup>1</sup> But the fitness craze is not limited to the United States. In 2015, of the 186,000 fitness centers and health clubs in operation worldwide, 36,000 were located in the United States. Globally, more than 150 million people were members of a health or fitness club.<sup>2</sup> And in light of continuing education about the importance of physical activity for overall health as well as the fact that, according to the Centers for Disease Control, over 70% of Americans over the age of 20 are overweight,<sup>3</sup> these numbers are not likely to decline.

How should Christians respond to these trends? Presently, it appears that the church is joining these trends. Numerous Christian books are being published on the topics of health, fitness, and dieting.<sup>4</sup> Conducting a Google search for nearby Zumba classes, a danced-oriented exercise program, will likely reveal several being offered *within church facilities*.

But how should we think about physical fitness in a biblically-informed way? What does the Bible have to say about exercise, and perhaps more broadly, about how we view and care for our bodies? How does physical fitness intersect with the spirituality of Christianity, if at all?

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1. [www.franchisehelp.com/industry-reports/fitness-industry-analysis-2018-cost-trends/](http://www.franchisehelp.com/industry-reports/fitness-industry-analysis-2018-cost-trends/)

2. [www.statista.com/topics/1141/health-and-fitness-clubs/](http://www.statista.com/topics/1141/health-and-fitness-clubs/)

3. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/obesity-overweight.htm>

4. For example, see Rick Warren, Daniel Amen, and Mark Hyman, *The Daniel Plan: 40 days to a healthier life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013); Joyce Meyer, *Look Great, Feel Great: 12 Keys to Enjoying a Healthy Life Now* (Nashville, TN: FaithWords, 2008); Diana Anderson, *Fit for Faith: a Christian woman's guide to total fitness* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma Media, 2011); Claire Cloninger and Laura Barr, *Faithfully Fit* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005).

An excellent starting point for addressing these questions is found in 1 Timothy 4:7-8. In these verses, the apostle Paul points Timothy away from futile and empty activities in his ministerial work and toward proper spiritual training. Within this instruction, Paul makes a comparative judgment between training for godliness and bodily training. Specifically, he writes, “Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”

While Paul’s words here are intended to accentuate the benefit of spiritual training, they can, at the same time, help us arrive at a biblical view of physical fitness that avoids two extremes: an overemphasis on physical fitness and an under emphasis on physical fitness.

### An Overemphasis on Physical Fitness

A case can be made that a significant segment of the population overemphasizes the value of physical fitness. Rather than bodily training having *some* value, we are tempted to conclude that bodily training has *supreme* value. This seems especially true if fitness is viewed primarily as a way of enhancing physical appearance.

Of course, an overemphasis on fitness and physical appearance is not a uniquely contemporary issue nor is it limited to certain geographical regions. Stories in the Bible, such as Jacob preferring beautiful Rachel to weak-eyed Leah, and of David being overlooked in favor of his brothers, demonstrate this. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that through printed and televised advertisements and social media apps such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, we are bombarded with physical images of the ideal body like never before. The standard is set for how we are supposed to look and many people, Christians included, feel immense pressure to measure up. Particularly disturbing is the fact that many of the images we see are altered, presenting us with an ideal that cannot actually be achieved. But due to advances in exercise science and nutritional research, along with a plethora of “success stories” featured in magazines, on television, and on social media, the ideal appears within reach. So we head to the gym to work out and make the necessary dietary changes so we can “get in shape.” If this proves ineffective or takes too long, we can always opt for surgical measures, starving ourselves, or bingeing and purging as eating disorders develop.

These latter methods reveal the fact that the primary motivation behind the fitness frenzy is not necessarily, perhaps is even rarely, actual *health*. Rather, the motivation is obtaining personal or peer acceptance and societal admiration by meeting cultural standards of physical appearance and beauty. It should not be all that surprising, then, that in our overemphasis on physical fitness, claims are often made that bodily training and exercise offer far more than physical health. We are told by a chorus of voices and a vast array of images saturating our culture that physical fitness and a toned body will provide us with self-confidence and self-acceptance, respect, empowerment, success, popularity, and overall happiness. If we join the right gym, adopt the right exercise program, use the right products, and get in shape, we can experience the transformed

life and rebirth that physical fitness can bring. And if it seems like terms such as “transformation” and “rebirth” are exaggerations of the promises sometimes made, think again. Some claim that this is precisely what physical fitness offers. According to their website, a fitness facility named Rebirth Body Transformation Center “provides cutting edge fitness and nutrition coaching to help you navigate the greatest transformation of your life.”<sup>5</sup> One reviewer of the exercise program P90X states, “This program did not change my life, it GAVE ME A LIFE TO LIVE.”<sup>6</sup>

These statements show that in today’s climate of overemphasizing physical fitness, adherence and devotion to working out can carry religious overtones. Membership dues function as a sort of tithe. There is often a spoken or unspoken expectation to adhere to certain “food laws” essential for the desired results. In an article entitled “The Consumerist Church of Fitness Classes,” Zan Romanoff observes that for some, going to the gym and working out actually mimic religious ritual.<sup>7</sup> “They assign times to arrive, instructors to revere as gurus, and routines to perform on command” she writes. “You know who will be leading the evening; you can anticipate the general contours of its energy. You know you will recognize familiar faces among the participating crowd.”<sup>8</sup> Romanoff further points out that it is not uncommon for a fitness proponent or instructor to suggest that “fitness is a gateway to a much larger and more lasting state of happiness and fulfillment, much like religious practice.”<sup>9</sup>

Apparently what fitness promises is becoming a physical specimen without spot or blemish – and some are wearing themselves out to achieve it. It would be foolish to assume that believers somehow remain insulated from these messages and immune to their influence. Whether we are male or female, young or old, gym members or not, it is almost impossible to avoid these messages in a culture preoccupied with how our bodies look and with an emphasis on “improving” them. But many churches nevertheless remain relatively silent on how to respond to these cultural voices and in providing instruction on how to think biblically about physical fitness, bodily training, and bodily care.

The church needs to bear witness to the fact that beauty is something that is more than and deeper than physical. And it is not something we ultimately achieve ourselves by working out at the gym but something we receive by virtue of being united to Jesus, our beautiful Savior, by grace through faith. It also needs to be acknowledged that even if we could achieve the cultural standards for fitness and beauty, we couldn’t *maintain* them. Time and age inevitably bring the deterioration – and eventually the dissolution – of our body and physical features. We need to come to terms with the truth of Paul’s admission in 2 Corinthians 4:16, that “our outer nature is wasting away,” and this despite our faithful commitment to exercising. In light of such realities, it is little wonder that Paul’s words about training for godliness allow us to confidently infer that, by contrast, bodily training holds no promise for the life to come.

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5. [www.rebirthtransformation.com](http://www.rebirthtransformation.com)

6. [www.beachbody.com/product/p90x-reviews-comments.do](http://www.beachbody.com/product/p90x-reviews-comments.do)

7. [www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/12/my-body-is-a-temple/547346](http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/12/my-body-is-a-temple/547346)

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

## An Under Emphasis on Physical Fitness

So clearly Christians simply need to reject an overemphasis on physical fitness and the body and hold firmly and faithfully to what Paul says to Timothy – that what is important is training for godliness. The spiritual is what counts; the physical body and bodily training do not matter. Except that is not what Paul says. While many people in our culture may be tempted to conclude that bodily training has *supreme* value, others, perhaps many in the church, are tempted to conclude that bodily training has *no* value. In place of an overemphasis on physical fitness that often results from being hyper-sensual, an under emphasis on physical fitness is adopted, which often results from being hyper-spiritual. Both are wrong.

Much like the overemphasis, under emphasizing the body and fitness is not a recent development either. On the contrary, it has been present in the church from its earliest days. The Gnostic idea that the material world, including our bodies, was not the work of the eternal God but of an inferior or evil being, and that the things of this world are not merely worthless but evil, crept into the church at an early date.<sup>10</sup> The belief that the pure form of existence is spiritual and that our bodies are prisons from which our souls need to be liberated persists in the church into the present.

This persistence may be due, at least in part, to a misinterpretation of biblical language. On more than one occasion, Paul attributes our problem to the “flesh.” He writes in Galatians 5:16-17, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.” Similarly, in Romans 8:6-8, he writes, “To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” It’s crucial to understand that when Paul talks about the “flesh” (from the Greek σάρξ), he is often not talking about our *physical bodies* (often referred to by the Greek σῶμα) but about our *fallen nature* in rebellion against God.<sup>11</sup> To be sure, this fallen nature corrupts and pollutes us holistically – body and soul. But while the physical body experiences corruption and sin flows *in* our bodies, it does not flow ultimately *from* our bodies. In other words, sinfulness is not an inevitable consequence of being embodied. Adam

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10. Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought: from the beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon, Vol. 1* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1970), 130.

11. This is particularly true in both Galatians and Romans. See R.J. Erickson, “Flesh” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 303-306. See also, Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996). Commenting on Romans 8, Moo writes, “‘Flesh’ . . . is not the flesh of our bodies, or the bodies themselves, but the ‘this-worldly’ orientation that all people share” (478). He also explains, “In describing the person outside of Christ as ‘in the flesh [sarx],’ Paul means in effect, that the non-Christian is ‘enveloped in,’ and hence controlled by, narrowly human, this-worldly principles and values” (418).

and Eve had bodies *before* the fall, and our Savior took upon himself a “true body” in the incarnation and remained sinless.<sup>12</sup>

Still, even those who avoid these interpretative errors can promote an under-emphasis on caring for our bodies in practice. In the church, where spiritual labors are foremost in importance, the attitude that physical health is a worldly concern not worth maintaining is not uncommon. In fact, kingdom work may be seen as even more noble if bodily health and fitness are sacrificed. For example, when one regularly skips meals, neglects adequate sleep, and consistently overworks to the point of experiencing a myriad of health problems, he or she is likely admired for it.<sup>13</sup> Though we should certainly encourage tenacious effort in kingdom work and acknowledge that there may be times faithful service to the Lord requires or results in sacrificing our physical health, we should not default to a position in which we glory in a continual neglect of our bodies or their fitness. Rather, we should aim for a biblical emphasis on physical fitness, marked by a biblically informed and balanced view of health and the human body and by practicing a biblical form of bodily care.

### A Biblical Emphasis on Physical Fitness

It is critical to recognize that, according to the Bible, our physical bodies are important; they matter. Our bodies are part of what makes us human. God did not – and does not – intend for us to live as disembodied creatures.<sup>14</sup> According to his perfect wisdom and good design, God created Adam and Eve with bodies as well as souls,<sup>15</sup> and their physical bodies were part of the created order deemed “very good” by God in Genesis 1:31. But our bodies not only make us human in a generic sense. Our distinctive physical features – our faces, our eyes, our hands, our voices – make up part of who

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12. See Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. & A. 22.

13. See, for example, Parker’s comments on John Calvin: “Overwork in his law-student days had impaired his digestion ... Later his lungs became affected, perhaps through too much preaching and talking, and he was incapacitated by lung hemorrhages. As if this were not enough, he was tortured by bladder stones and the gout. And yet he drove his body beyond its limits.” T.H.L. Parker, “The Life and Times of John Calvin,” *Christian History* 12 (1986).

14. It is true that upon death believers exist in an intermediate state as disembodied souls, but the doctrine of the resurrection of believers makes it clear that this is not the ideal nor final state of our existence. As God created us in the beginning to be embodied, so we will be in the final state of glory. See Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979). Hoekema asserts, “Since the New Testament does occasionally speak of the ‘souls’ or the ‘spirits’ of men as still existing during the time between death and resurrection, we may also do so, as long as we remember that this state of existence is provisional, temporary, and incomplete. Because man is not totally man apart from the body, the central eschatological hope of the Scriptures with regard to man is not the mere continued existence of the ‘soul’ (as in Greek thought) but the resurrection of the body” (95).

15. Some make a sharp distinction between the Bible’s use of “soul” and “spirit.” As a result, some hold to a position, commonly referred to as trichotomism, that humans are made up of three constituent parts: body, soul, and spirit. For a refutation of this position by showing the interchangeability of the terms “soul” and “spirit” in Scripture, see Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 192-195.

we are as unique individuals. These features may not make up the most important part of who we are, but they do make up part of the “real me” and the “real you” nonetheless.

Moreover, our bodies and souls are intricately linked. We are *psychosomatic* creatures,<sup>16</sup> meaning the body affects the soul and the soul affects the body. Most, if not all, of us are less loving – impatient, irritable, easily angered – when we are physically hungry. Most, if not all, of us are less likely to fight temptation successfully when we are physically tired. The connections between worry and ulcers, anger and blood pressure, stress and headaches, and prayer and physical healing also reveal this psychosomatic quality. Not surprisingly, our language betrays our intuitive awareness of the connection between body and soul: using the word “heart” to refer to both a physical organ and the seat of spiritual life; speaking of being “rubbed” the wrong way when we are emotionally irritated; and talking about our “gut” in reference to our stomach as well as to a mechanism of guidance and direction, as in “my gut is telling me to avoid such-and-such.” The integration of body and soul helps explain why something like touch is capable of having powerful physical consequences as well as deeply emotional and spiritual effects, both positive and negative. It also explains why Scripture routinely recognizes how our activities have both physical and spiritual dimensions, such as sexual intercourse (see 1 Cor. 6:15-16), drunkenness, and fasting. Such activities are at once both physical and spiritual, engaging both body and soul.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the Bible’s teaching on the importance of the physical body is most clear when we consider our redemption. Jesus took upon himself a human body in the incarnation, died a physical death as a substitute for sinners on the cross, and was then raised in the same, yet now glorified, physical body in which he continues to exist and reign.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the entire scope of Jesus’ redemptive work involves indispensable *physical* as well as spiritual aspects – because our bodies matter. “The entire human person has always been the arena for God’s transforming work. Psychology professor David Benner says, ‘To be human is to be embodied, so any spirituality that fails to take the body seriously necessarily diminishes our humanity.’”<sup>19</sup>

But it is important to notice that in 1 Timothy 4:7-8, Paul does not merely suggest that the body is important but more specifically that *bodily training* – purposeful activity (i.e., exercise) that aims to improve physical performance in measureable ways – has value. Paul says bodily training has *some* value (σωματικὴ γυμνασία πρὸς ὀλίγον ἐστὶν ὠφέλιμος). While Paul is accentuating the comparative superiority of training for godliness (εὐσέβεια) he does not negate the value of bodily training. Rather than negating its value or classifying bodily training as worthless or unprofitable (ἀνωφελεῖς, μάταιοι cf. Titus 3:9), he uses the term ὀλίγον (small, little,

16. This word comes from the Greek words for soul (ψυχή) and body (σῶμα).

17. In light of our psychosomatic nature, it should hardly seem shocking when we discover later in this very letter that Paul’s concern for Timothy and his ministry extends to his *physical* condition when he instructs him in 1 Timothy 5:23, “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.”

18. See Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. & A. 21.

19. Adam S. McHugh, *The Listening Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 193.

short; small amount, often rendered few in the plural).<sup>20</sup> In other contexts, ὀλίγον clearly refers to or is used to modify things that possess significant value,<sup>21</sup> but less in some way *relative to something else*.<sup>22</sup> The *relative* value of bodily training compared to training for godliness is Paul's concern in his instruction to Timothy. Knight states "The consensus ... is that Paul is comparing the limited benefit of σωματική γυμνασία (πρὸς ὀλίγον) and the limitless benefit of εὐσέβεια (πρὸς πάντα): The smallness of the former as a foil for the latter (cf. 1 Cor. 9:25)."<sup>23</sup> But within his concern to impress upon Timothy the value of training for godliness, he admits to bodily training possessing a measure of worth.

So Paul's assertion that bodily training has *some* value should protect us from an overemphasis on physical fitness that regards it as having *supreme* value. Physical fitness must not be pursued foolishly to the neglect of godliness, and bodily training should not eclipse the importance of spiritual training, which is of much greater value. Indeed, this is the fundamental point of Paul's instruction. A lifestyle in which spiritual disciplines and ministerial service are short-circuited or crowded out by physical exercise has lost sight of the comparative benefits of each. At the same time, Paul's passing nod to bodily training, though in the context of asserting the comparatively superior benefits of spiritual training, should protect us from an under emphasis that regards physical fitness as having *no* value. Rather, Paul's words help us arrive at a balanced, biblical perspective on fitness.

This perspective that our physical bodies matter and that bodily training and fitness have value carries important implications. Fundamentally it means that we should care for our bodies. Paul assumes a nourishing disposition toward our own bodies when in Ephesians 5:28-29 he instructs husbands to love their wives as they would love their own bodies, observing that "no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it." We should nourish our bodies and care for them well. In some cases, this may very well include physical training to achieve greater levels of fitness in service to God and his glory.<sup>24</sup> In the very least, however, it includes providing our bodies with the physical activity required to maintain healthy functioning, along with proper rest and nutrition. It is important to clarify that physical activity should not be understood as synonymous with working out at the gym. Of course, physical activity includes this, but it also involves simple, active lifestyle

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20. Warren C. Trenchard, *Complete Vocabulary Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

21. For example, see Matthew 7:14; 9:37; 20:16; 22:14, Mark 8:7; 2 Corinthians 8:15, James 3:5.

22. For examples of its use in this relative sense, see Mark 6:5-6; Luke 12:47-48; James 4:14; 1 Peter 5:10; 5:12.

23. George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A commentary on the Greek text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 193-201.

24. Five general components of *fitness* are typically recognized: cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition (measured by body fat percentage). In addition, there are several components of "motor" fitness: muscular power, speed, balance, coordination, accuracy, and agility. In order for improvements to take place in any of these areas, physical conditioning and training are required.

choices such as walking regularly instead of riding, taking stairs instead of elevators, cutting the grass with a push mower instead of a riding mower, and choosing to walk into places where drive-thrus may be available. All people, but particularly Christians, should be purposeful in making physically active choices in a conscious effort to be faithful to the design of their Creator as well with awareness of its numerous benefits.<sup>25</sup>

But a degree of caution is in order. Physical fitness should not be pursued in order to attain the “perfect body,” or even a better-looking body according to cultural standards. It is necessary to keep in mind the words of Scripture that teach us that God looks on the inward rather than the outward (see 1 Sam. 16:7), and that whereas “charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain . . . a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” (Prov. 31:30).<sup>26</sup> As Christians, we need to acknowledge and embrace an inward beauty of godliness in Christ that is more than physical and that has value not only for the present but for eternity. Paul Tripp is right in stating, “There is nothing ever made that is more gorgeous than a heart ruled by an active and joyful worship of God. And there is but one surgeon who can produce such beauty, the Messiah, the suffering Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>27</sup>

We must also be careful to avoid pursuing physical fitness as a means to guarantee overall health. It is presumptuous to think we can insulate ourselves against weakness and sickness simply by exercising since we are not ultimately in control of our health. Despite unwavering commitment to even the best workout regimens and nutritional plans, God may, through no fault of our own, take from us the gift of health. Accidents, injuries, autoimmune diseases, and other chronic illnesses, as well as the degenerative effects of aging, cannot be kept at bay by faithfully hitting the gym, and we need to reject cultural messages that seem to imply they can. God may very well supply us with vitality and strength as he works *through* us, but he may also visit us with sickness and weakness as he works *in* us for our sanctification. Charles Spurgeon, himself no stranger to physical ailments, once said, “I venture to say that the greatest earthly blessing that God can give to any of us is health, with the exception of sickness. Sickness has frequently been of more use to the saints of God than health has.”<sup>28</sup> It is

25. According to information disseminated by U.S. Health and Human Services, regular physical activity helps control weight, improves muscular strength, promotes strong bone, muscle, and joint development, improves the condition of the heart and lungs, improves sleep, decreases the potential for depression and other mental health issues, increases energy levels, relieves stress, and can help reduce the risk of high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, stroke, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. See [www.hhs.gov/fitness/active/importance-of-physical-activity/index.html](http://www.hhs.gov/fitness/active/importance-of-physical-activity/index.html).

26. One would be hard pressed to find biblical warrant for engaging in activities aimed primarily at improving our outward appearance at all with the exceptions of basic hygienic measures necessary for personal health and loving our neighbors. To the contrary, we read in 1 Peter 3:3-4, “Do not let your adorning be external — the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing — but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.”

27. Paul David Tripp, “Appearance is Everything: Reclaiming God’s Image in an Image-Obsessed Culture,” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Fall 2005), 39.

28. Quoted by Curtis C. Thomas, *Practical Wisdom for Pastors* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 102.



not unusual for the path of spiritual maturity to wind through valleys in which we learn to say with the Psalmist, “It is good for me that I was afflicted” (Ps. 119:71), and with the apostle Paul, “Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses ... For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

In the end, the biblical incentive for physical activity and bodily care must be neither to attain outward beauty nor to guarantee health, but *to practice faithful stewardship*. We are called faithfully to steward all of the gifts and blessings that our heavenly Father has bestowed upon us and that includes our bodies. Our bodies are a gift that ultimately belong not to us but to our Redeemer and King. Paul reminds us of this in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 where he also explicitly spells out the *bodily* implications, writing, “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (ἐν τῷ σώματι ὑμῶν). The aim of fitness and physical training is to take care of what God has entrusted to us as best as we can in order to carry out the various callings he has given us as best and as faithfully as we can to his glory and in service to others.

In light of our different callings and interests, how this plays out and what this requires will differ from person to person. We should not be plagued with guilt and insecurity if our bodies do not measure up to cultural standards of beauty or look a certain way. Nor do we need to seek forgiveness for our physical limitations resulting from sickness or weakness. But if we routinely neglect to care for our bodies – whether through a lack of staying physically active according to our abilities, through an unhealthy diet, or by an irresponsible disregard of the need for rest and sleep, then we are not being a faithful steward of what God has given. We need to confess that, repent, and take steps for change.

However, we do so in the knowledge that “our outer self is wasting away.” But “we do not lose heart” because “our inner self is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16). God our Father has already taken our soiled heart and cleansed it by the blood of Jesus, and has taken up residence there by the Holy Spirit. And the renewing work that God has begun inwardly is a guarantee that this renewal will one day encompass our outward bodies, which will be “further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (2 Cor. 5:4). When Jesus returns and makes all things new, we will be resurrected, glorified, and beautified – body and soul. We have, by God’s gracious gift, a perfect specimen without spot or blemish provided for us in Whom we are perfected. In Jesus alone we find true and lasting health and beauty. As we belong to him, we give ourselves to him completely – body and soul – in faithful stewardship now that we might receive his glorious commendation in the age to come: “well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21, 23).